customers registered with the LPG distributors. In the current year (April-January), a total of 46.76 lakhs of new LPG connections and 9.97 lakhs of Double Bottle Connections (DBCs) have been released by the OMCs. The number of domestic LPG customers has gone up from 7.72 crores as on 1.4.2004 to 9.25 crores as on 1.1.2007. However, at times, because of operational problems, occasional backlogs do occur. OMCs have reported a backlog of one to four days in five States due to disruption in supplies on account of heavy rains, heavy snowfall in Jammu-Srinagar Highway, labour unrest in Kerala resulting in closure of bottling plants and increased demand on account of Holi festival. Government has advised OMCs to liquidate the backlog in these States by operating the bottling plants on holidays and during extended hours.

While OMCs are making all efforts to meet the genuine demand of the customers registered with the LPG distributors, they have reported 59 established cases of delay in supply of LPG refill cylinders by their LPG distributors during the year 2006-07 (1.4.2006 to 28.2.2007). Action against the erring distributors is taken in accordance with the provisions under the LPG Marketing Discipline Guidelines (MDG).

Subsidy on LPG and kerosene oil

†2373. SHRI MAHENDRA SAHNI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the subsidy being provided on LPG and Kerosene oil will merely continue till 31st March, 2007;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are considering on any new policy for giving subsidy on LPG and kerosene oil;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (e) Government is administering the PDS Kerosene and Domestic LPG Subsidy Scheme,

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

2002 through which the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) are being paid subsidy currently at 1/3rd level of 2002-03 at a flat rate from the Union Budget. The subsidy from Government has been frozen at the current level and is to be phased out in 2006-07. The issue of further continuation of the Scheme is under the consideration of the Government.

Hardships being faced by the middle class due to high price of LPG

2374. SHRI VIJAYKUMAR RUPANI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that due to high price of LPG middle class families have to spend much more on fuel to prepare food than on the main ingredients of food such as grains and vegetables;

(b) whether Government have any plan to avoid the hardship of the middle class family;

(c) whether Government want to link the LPG price with the average income of LPG consumers to curtail the heavy burden of prices on middle class;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) In the post Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) era, domestic LPG and PDS Kerosene are highly subsidized by the Government. Despite steep increase in the prices of crude oil and petroleum products in the international market, the doemstic selling price of domestic LPG has not been revised since 5.11.2004. The Government has taken certain measures in favour of vulnerable segments of the economy, by ensuring that the burden was shared by all the stakeholders, namely, the Government, the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) and the consumers. This has resulted in huge under-recoveries to OMCs. The subsidy given by the Government and OMCs on LPG Domestic for the current year i.e. 2006-07 (Apr.-Dec.'06) is given below: